

Folk Stories from the Northern Solomons. 63

contents of one of my note-books, picked at random, shows¹²⁶ that out of 49 stories, old or elderly men were responsible for 12, old or elderly women for 10, young men for 11, young women for 14, a boy and a girl for one each.

At the outset of my work I took down the stories in^[198] Pidgin English, with which many of the younger men were acquainted as they had worked as indentured labourers on coconut plantations. From these I chose, as carefully as I could, those who seemed best suited to act as interpreters for the older men, the stories being translated sentence by sentence.

The dialect spoken on the island of Petats has been re-¹²⁶duced to writing by Rev. A. H. Cropp, who has for many²²⁶ years been working on Buka as Methodist Missionary.¹⁷⁷ He used our own alphabet, adapted by means of certain conventions to fit the sounds of the language. Some of the younger men have learnt to write under his tuition. One of these wrote out for me, in the Petats dialect, several stories as told by his father, an old man of considerable standing. Except for these, the stories I collected on Petats and Buka were all taken down in Pidgin English.

During my stay at Kurtatchi, however, I accustomed¹²⁶ myself to the use of the native dialect, on which no previous work has been done. I employed a simplified form of the International Phonetic System, but without attempting to record the finer shades of pronunciation, in which there is considerable individual variation. The natives soon learnt to talk slowly enough for me to write from their dictation, and at the end of a story I read out what I had written to the assembled company, who were not slow to correct me when I made a mistake. Then, or subsequently, I went over the text again, sentence by sentence, with one of the natives who spoke good Pidgin English, writing down the Pidgin

¹ Mr. Cropp very kindly allowed me to make use of his MS. dictionary and grammatical notes on the Petats dialect, which have been of great assistance to me.